

# High-end printers handle big jobs

If you love the quality of your laser printer but get frustrated by its snail's pace of production, you may be ready to move into the fast lane of laser printing.

Since Hewlett-Packard introduced the LaserJet printer four or five years ago, laser printers have become quite affordable, and they've taken offices by storm. They're fast, reliable and relatively inexpensive. Their print quality exceeds any dot matrix or daisy wheel printer, and they're also much quieter than their more primitive cousins.

I'd estimate that 90 percent of all personal computer users are perfectly well-served by the laser printers offered at the low end of the market. A second, good laser printer can be bought for less than \$2,000, and it will have all the printing characteristics you might need. But, if you need more printing capacity, a faster model may be the answer.

I recently tried out a couple of



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the pricier laser printers on the market today, the Toshiba PageLaser 12, at \$3,799, and the Genicom 5010, \$3,495.

As expected, each performed beautifully, and provided dramatic increases in output over the low-end workhorse machines. Each handles either graphics or text with ease. Text can be printed in many different fonts. Both machines have easy-to-use controls and adequate paper trays.

But here are a few comparisons and drawbacks I observed:

■ The Genicom prints 10 sheets a minute, while the Toshiba prints 12 a minute. Less expensive models output six to eight pages.

■ Both machines take up about

the same table area as the original HP LaserJet, but they are roughly double the height of the new, reduced-size LaserJet Plus.

■ The Toshiba accepts letter- or legal-size paper, and an optional paper tray for envelopes is available. The Genicom will accept any paper widths from 4 inches to 8½ inches.

■ On Genicom's downside, I found it difficult to get a satisfactory print density with the courier and elite fonts. So, when I wanted those fonts, I would go back to using my Hewlett-Packard printer.

■ On Toshiba's downside, I discovered there are few local maintenance services throughout the country for repairs. When the unit I was testing broke down, it had to be shipped back to California.

There are two big advantages to having more than one printer of the same kind in your office. First, everyone has just one set of controls to learn. Second, you have a back-up machine should one break

down. This makes buying a second low-end printer of the same type you now have the least risky choice.

For the location of local dealers, contact Toshiba America Inc. at (800) 457-7777 and Genicom Corp. at (800) 535-4364, or your local Hewlett-Packard dealer.

■ The bottom line: Although high-priced printers work beautifully, each costs so much that you could easily buy two less expensive printers that will give you the same quality and let you spread them out among the personal computers in your office. But if you have large print runs that you don't want split between machines, I'd recommend either the Toshiba or the Genicom as a good investment.

*Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.*